SWAN SONG IN THE NILE VALLEY: THE MAMLŪK STATELET IN DONGOLA (1812 – 1820)[1]

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This article focuses on the last years of Mamlūk rule in the Nile Valley. First, the article briefly discusses the all-out war between the Egyptian viceroy Muhammad ᶜAlī Pasha and the Mamlūks, and the subsequent withdrawal of the latter to Dongola in northern Sudan. This is followed by a description of the situation in Nubia and Dongola at the beginning of the 19th century. The main goal of the paper is to depict the fortunes of the short-lived Mamlūk statelet in Dongola, which existed throughout the second decade of the 19th century in a state of incessant war with its Shāyqīya neighbours, only to disappear due to the Turco-Egyptian expedition of conquest against the Funj kingdom of Sinnār led by Ismāᶜīl Kāmil Pasha, son of the Egyptian viceroy Muḥammad ᶜAlī Pasha, in 1820.

Keywords: ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey, Dongola, Funj Kingdom, Ibrāhīm Bey al-Kabīr, Mamlūks, Muḥammad ᶜAlī, Makk Shāwīsh, Shāyqīya, Turco-Egyptian expedition

The Mamlūk invasion of Dongola (Arab. Dunqulā) in 1812, and their subsequent occupation of the region that lasted almost a decade, represent a short and under-researched episode in the history of Sudan. At the same time, it is a sad epilogue to a long period of Mamlūk rule in the Nile Valley.

Extermination of the Mamlūks in Egypt

Mamlūk rule in Egypt began in 1250 after they had overthrown the Ayyūbid dynasty (1171 – 1250). At the height of their power, their empire stretched from

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Barqa[2] in today's Libya in the west to Syria and al-Ḥijāz in the east. Cairo was the capital of their empire, and historians divide their rule into two eras: the Baḥrī period (1250 – 1382/1390) and the Burjī/Circassian regime (1382/1390 – 1517).[3] Eventually, the Mamlūks were defeated twice by the Ottomans, first at Marj Dābiq in 1516 and again the following year at ar-Raydānīya, close to Cairo. The Ottoman conquest led to a temporary suspension of Mamlūk rule in Egypt. However, it did not spell their end, as by the 18th century, the Mamlūks regained *de facto* power over the country, even though Egypt formally remained a part of the Ottoman Empire. The peak of the Mamlūk revival occurred during the ascendency of ᶜAlī Bey al-Kabīr (1760 – 1773).[4] Despite the Ottoman sultans' attempts to suppress the Mamlūks' autonomy, the latter kept control of the country until Napoleon's expedition and takeover (1798 – 1801). Notwithstanding the depletion in ranks as a result of their defeat by the French, the Mamlūks were not entirely eliminated, as Napoleon had intended before his arrival: "A few days after we arrive, they [the Mamlūks] will no longer exist."[5] Many withdrew to the south (Murād Bey, †1801) and east (Ibrāhīm Bey), and returned back after the defeat of the French. Following the departure of the French expedition, a period of political anarchy ensued, which led to the gradual but irreversible disintegration of Mamlūk power at the expense of Muḥammad ᶜAlī, who first became the commander of the Ottoman Albanian forces in 1803, and then from 1805 served as the Ottoman governor.[6]

After a period of uneasy coexistence, Muḥammad ᶜAlī inflicted a crucial blow to the Mamlūks on 1 March 1811 when he invited them to the Cairo Citadel, ostensibly to celebrate the launching of an expedition against the Wahhābīs led by his son Aḥmad Ṭūsūn Pasha. His Albanian troops massacred about 1,200 Mamlūks as they were leaving the Cairo Citadel through Bāb al-ᶜAzab and in the subsequent pursuit within the city.[7] Afterwards, those who had survived retreated to Upper Egypt. From there, they were expelled further south to Nubia by the eldest son of the Ottoman governor, Ibrāhīm Pasha, who was

[2] Cyrenaica, the eastern region of Libya.

[3] NORTHRUP, L. *The Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate, 1250 – 1390*, pp. 242–289; GARCIN, J.-C. *The Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks*, pp. 290–317.

[4] CLEVELAND, W. L., BUNTON, M. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 64. For the 18th century, some historians tend to use the term "Ottoman Egyptians" instead of Mamlūks, as the long Ottoman rule had a profound impact on the country and its institutions. COLE, J. *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*, pp. 55–56.

[5] COLE, J. *Napoleon's Egypt*, p. 11.

[6] SORBY, K. R. *Egypt: The Period of Political Anarchy (1801 – 1805)*; DODWEL, H. *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali*, pp. 1–38.

[7] For a detailed description of the massacre at the Citadel, see AL-JABARTĪ, ᶜAbdarraḥmān. *Tārīkh al-Jabartī* [al-Jabartī's History], pp. 182–187.

tasked with hunting them down. A major battle between Ibrāhīm's army and the Mamlūks took place in the vicinity of the village of Wādī Kustamna, upstream from Aswān. After suffering a smashing defeat, the Mamlūks withdrew to the surrounding mountains and waited for the departure of the enemy troops. Subsequently, they crossed to the west bank of the Nile (in May 1812, when the Nile was extraordinarily low), and continued south in order to move out of Muḥammad ᶜAlī's reach. Having divided into two groups, one followed the course of the river, and the other, which included both of their leaders, Ibrāhīm Bey al-Kabīr and ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey, took a shorter route through the desert. After the two groups met again at the third cataract, they continued further upstream.[8] Nevertheless, not all of the Mamlūks travelled directly to Dongola. Some of them, including Salīm Bey aṭ-Ṭawīl, moved southeast from Egypt in the direction of Barbar, which was inhabited by the Mīrafāb tribe.[9] The local *makk*[10] received them in a friendly fashion and let them stay for several months out of fear of them.[11]

Burckhardt describes one more massacre of Mamlūks, which took place near Isnā in Upper Egypt. A large number of Mamlūks had been hiding in the eastern desert, where they spent most of their assets on food and fodder sold at extortionate prices by the ᶜAbābda and Bishārīya tribes. In such desperate circumstances, about four hundred[12] of them naively believed Ibrāhīm Pasha's promises that those who surrendered would be reinstated to their previous offices and positions. One by one, they arrived at the military camp, surrendering. When Ibrāhīm Pasha became sure that no one else was willing to stand down, he let all of those who had surrendered be killed.[13]

[8] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 11–12; HOLT, P. M.: *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516 – 1922: A Political History*, p. 179; MCGREGOR, A. J. *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, pp. 67–68.

[9] Barbar is located east of the Shāyqīya country, beyond the Bayūḍa desert.

[10] This title is either of non-Arabic origin, or it represents an abbreviation of Arabic *malik* (king). It was used by the local rulers and tribal leaders in Sudan.

[11] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 256.

[12] According to a different report, up to 800 Mamlūks were killed this way. DODWELL, H. *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali*, p. 36.

[13] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 13–14; MCGREGOR, A. J. *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War*, p. 67.

Situation in Nubia and Dongola

In the second half of the 16th century, Nubia,[14] called Berberistan by the Ottomans, was integrated into the Ottoman Empire. There are two versions of the story of its conquest by the Ottomans. According to one of them, it happened thanks to Özdemir Pasha, the former Ottoman governor of Yemen. After successfully acquiring the approval of the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520 – 1566) in approximately 1550, Özdemir Pasha organized an expedition that set out from Egypt southward along the Nile. First, he conquered Nubia, and then continued eastward to the Red Sea, where he seized the ports of Sawākin and Maṣawwaᶜ and created a new Ottoman province by the name of Abyssinia. Before that, Özdemir Pasha had established three forts in Nubia (Aswān, Ibrīm, and Sāy) and stationed Bosnian garrisons in them. Nubia was to be administered by an appointed *kāshif*,[15] however, the lineage of the first Ottoman governor Ḥasan Quzzī (Ghuzzī) ruled the area until the 19th century.[16] Yet, this version of these historical events has been contested by A. C. S. Peacock. Based on information from an anonymous contemporary Ottoman chronicle, he claims that Özdemir Pasha never reached past the first cataract of the Nile because a mutiny had broken out in his expedition. The Ottoman Empire thus conquered Nubia gradually in the course of the second half of the 16th century. During the two decades following the unsuccessful expedition, the Ottomans conquered Ibrīm. That said, it is not known when they conquered Sāy, located further south.[17]

Nubia consisted of a number of specific areas. The northernmost part, which lies between Aswān[18] and Kuruskū, was inhabited by the Banū al-Kanz, who spoke a distinct Nubian language. The areas between Kuruskū and Wādī Ḥalfā were dominated by two forts: Derr (Arab. ad-Dirr) and Ibrīm. These parts of

[14] What is referred to as Nubia in this paper is the area between the first and the third cataract of the Nile, bordering Egypt in the north and Dongola in the south. Sometimes, a larger region is referred to as Nubia. The broader definition includes the area from Aswān to the confluence of the Nile and ᶜAṭbara, or alternatively, reaching the location of contemporary Khartoum.

[15] The Mamlūk title of a governor.

[16] HOLT, P. M. *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516 – 1922*, pp. 52–54; HOLT, P. M., DALY, M. W. *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, p. 26.

[17] PEACOCK, A. C. S. *The Ottomans and the Funj Sultanate in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries*, pp. 93–94.

[18] At the time of Burckhardt's visit, the village Birba, located close to the island of Philae, was the southernmost point of Egypt, beyond which lied Nubia. BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 5.

Nubia have been submerged under water since the Aswān High Dam was completed in January 1971.[19] Spanning about 160 kilometres above the second cataract is a very inhospitable region, Baṭn al-Ḥajar, full of tongues and cataracts and with a minimal amount of agricultural activity. Burckhardt estimated that during his 1813 visit, only about 200 people lived in that area.[20] To the south, Baṭn al-Ḥajar neighbours the more fertile Sukkot (Arab. as-Sukkūt). The southernmost region of Nubia, bordering Dongola, is al-Maḥas. The Sāy region, named after the eponymous island, is sometimes considered a separate geographical area. The whole region of Nubia was governed by the Nubian *kāshifs*, a title held at the beginning of the 19th century by three brothers: Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad. Some areas, however, were ruled by the *kāshifs*' vassals, who paid them tribute, like the *makks* of al-Maḥas Ibrāhīm and Zubayr. The areas abutting the three major fortresses – Aswān, Ibrīm and Sāy – were independent, and each had its own military commander – an *agha*. Their inhabitants' skin was lighter than that of the surrounding population, given that they were the descendants of Bosnian garrisons who were stationed there during the second half of the 16th century. Thanks to their possession of firearms, they were able to protect their independence against the Nubian *kāshifs*, who, after the creation of the Mamlūk statelet in 1812, found themselves between a rock and a hard place. In the north, Muḥammad ᶜAlī, whose grip on Egypt and military power had been constantly growing, loomed large, whereas in the south, the Mamlūks, who still retained some relevant military strength, had established themselves.[21]

The temporary stay of the Mamlūks hurt Nubia significantly. Its inhabitants had to endure the prolonged presence of the Turco-Egyptian troops of Ibrāhīm Pasha as they were engaged in a total war against the Mamlūks. The area was quite poorly developed in terms of agriculture, and unlike in Dongola and Egypt, the banks of the Nile were rather high, which in many locations prevented the characteristic yearly floods from reaching the soil. Merely a small portion of the land allowed for crop production, often only with the help of *sāqiya* (water wheels pulled by cattle). As the Mamlūks were traversing Nubia all the way from the north to the south, they looted it thoroughly. Due to these circumstances, a famine broke out, and a major part of the population either died or fled to Upper Egypt. Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, who visited Nubia in 1813, one year after the Mamlūks passed across it, provides several descriptions

[19] FAHIM, Hussain M. *Dams, People and Development: The Awan High Dam Case*, p. 38
[20] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 43.
[21] Ibid., pp. 61–62.

of the pitiful state of the country and its deserted villages.[22] According to him, one of the main fortresses, Ibrīm, was completely destroyed as a result of two sieges, and the rich region surrounding it was devastated as well. Burckhardt describes the Mamlūks' actions in Nubia and the utter destruction they left behind in following words: "They [the Mamlūks] took from the Wady Ibrim about twelve hundred cows, all the sheep and goats, imprisoned the most respectable people, for whose ransom they received upwards of 100,000 Spanish dollars; and on their departure, put the Aga to death; their men having eaten up or destroyed all the provisions they could meet with. This scene of pillage, was followed by a dreadful famine, […]."[23]

However, this was not the only problem that Nubia faced at that time. The southern part of Nubia also had to deal with regular raids of the Shāyqīya, which mainly took place on the eastern bank but occasionally reached the western bank of the Nile as well. In addition, the western bank was subject to yearly looting by the Arab Bedouins who lived west of Asyūt. What added to the devastation of the area was a particular practice of the Nubian *kāshifs*, who constantly travelled around Nubia, ruthlessly and arbitrarily collecting taxes from its population.[24]

A major part of the modern state of Sudan had, since the early 16th century, been a part of the Funj Kingdom of Sinnār. During the 18th century, however, the central power gradually weakened and individual vassals of the Funj Kingdom gained independence. The same was true for the northernmost region of the Funj Kingdom, Dongola. This area lies between the third cataract of the Nile in the north and the city of ad-Dabba in the south, and had been populated by the Danāqila (sg. Dunqulāwī). Until the 18th century, Dongola benefited from the long-distance transit trade between the Funj Kingdom and Egypt. However, after the Shāyqīya tribal confederation's rise to power, the routes of commerce began to avoid Dongola, moving eastward. In the second half of the 18th century, Dongola was ruled by a *makk* from the Zubayr dynasty (Arab. awlād Zubayr). In the 1780s, the Zubayr dynasty was subjugated by the ᶜAdlānāb, and thereafter Dongola formed part of the expanding domain of the Shāyqīya. As the Shāyqīya *makks* turned the rulers of Dongola into their vassals, they received half of their tax income. In order to collect taxes more effectively, they spent part of the year in the region – either on the island of Argo, in Marāgha, or in al-Khandaq. That way, they were able to strengthen their hold over the country.[25] At the same time, the Shāyqīya also took control

[22] Ibid., pp. 11–12, 33.
[23] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 32–33.
[24] Ibid., pp. 58, 92, 94–95.
[25] Ibid., p. 71.

of the area lying between ad-Dabba and al-Qurayr, which, until then, formed the district of the northern Funj.[26]

Mamlūks in Dongola

Only about ten percent (i.e. 300 to 400) of the original 4,000 Mamlūks who lived in Egypt at the time Muḥammad ᶜAlī assumed power arrived in Sudan.[27] They were led by two beys. The older one, Ibrāhīm Bey, was a Mamlūk of Muḥammad Abū adh-Dhahab, after whose death in 1775 he received the title of *shaykh al-balad*, becoming the *de facto* ruler of Egypt. Later, Ibrāhīm Bey controlled Egypt with Murād Bey as one of the duumvirs. He must have been familiar with Nubia as he had stayed there for a certain time between 1786 and 1787, when the Ottoman sultan dislodged the duumvirate and made them retreat all the way behind the first cataract. However, the duumvirs quickly restored their rule over Egypt after these events. The second commander of the Mamlūk refugees was ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey.[28]

After their arrival to Dongola, the Mamlūks were welcomed by an ᶜAdlānāb[29] chief named Maḥmūd. They pretended to be heading further south to Sinnār, and *Makk* Maḥmūd extended his hospitality to them and gave them a multitude of gifts. A few days later, however, the Mamlūks paid him a visit while he was at the house of Chief Judge Muḥammad at Marāgha, under the pretext of seeking fodder for their horses. After a short discussion, they murdered him and seized Dongola. In fact, they only succeeded in gaining control over the west bank of the Nile and the islands. The east bank remained under the sway of the Shāyqīya with their swift cavalry.[30] The Mamlūk rule gradually stabilized in the northern part of Dongola, in the region that spanned from Ḥannik in the north to al-Khandaq in the south. For their capital, they

[26] HOSKINS, G. A. *Travels in Ethiopia, above the Second Cataract of the Nile*, p. 202; O'FAHEY, R. S., SPAULDING, J. *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, p. 101.
[27] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 12–13; WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 230.
[28] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 225–226; HOLT, P. M. *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516 – 1922*, p. 100.
[29] The ᶜAdlānāb were the most powerful dynasty that ruled the Shāyqīya tribal confederation.
[30] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 71–72; HOSKINS, G. A. *Travels in Ethiopia, above the Second Cataract of the Nile*, pp. 201–202.

chose Marāgha,[31] known better under different names – al-ᶜUrdī (from Turkish *ordu* – camp) or (New) Dongola (Arab. Dunqulā or Dunqulā al-ᶜUrdī).[32] Under Mamlūk control, the capital of New Dongola grew significantly in size, becoming an important regional economic and trade centre,[33] among other things, owing to the fact that the Mamlūks arrived with large sums of money acquired by looting Nubia.[34] Waddington, who participated in Ismāᶜīl Kāmil's expedition, estimated that the section of the town consisting of mud-houses could accommodate up to 800 people, while the majority of its inhabitants lived in straw huts.[35]

During the Mamlūk rule, minor progress in the field of agriculture took place in the northern part of Dongola, with wheat replacing to some extent the traditionally grown sorghum. However, the situation of the local population worsened as the taxes raised by the Mamlūks comprised one third of the harvest, much more than previously. What's more, the local farmers faced repeated raids by the Shāyqīya cavalry, whose members were able to cross the Nile on horses very quickly. In order to keep the horses from drowning, they tied inflated animal-skin water bags to them. They usually attacked several islands simultaneously, and the Mamlūks, given their small number, were mostly unable to respond with sufficient speed. However, when the Mamlūks succeeded in capturing the raiders, a cruel punishment awaited them as they were impaled[36] in a public place.[37]

[31] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 226–227; MACMICHAEL, H. A. *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan: And Some Account of the People Who Preceded Them and of the Tribes Inhabiting Dárfūr*, p. 217.

[32] The former capital of the Medieval kingdom of al-Muqurra, Old Dongola (Arab. Dunqulā al-ᶜajūz), is located further south on the east bank of the Nile and was not a part of the Mamlūk statelet. The kingdom of al-Muqurra was located in the north of modern Sudan and south of today's Egypt from 4th – 5th to 14th century. In the period of al-Muqurra's disintegration, the name of the its capital extended to the whole area.

[33] Apparently, in the preceding period, trade in Dongola was much less active compared to the regions further south. BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 66.

[34] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 226–227.

[35] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 224.

[36] Impalement was one of the favourite methods of execution administered by the two Turco-Egyptian expeditions to Sudan. ROBINSON, A. E. *The Conquest of the Sudan by the Wali of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha, 1820 – 1824*, part II, pp. 166, 169, 178.

[37] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 227–228.

After conquering Lower Dongola, the Mamlūks took similar steps as the conquerors that preceded them. They did not overthrow the local Zubayr dynasty, turning them into their vassals instead. To secure better control over the region, the local *makk* had to move from his original seat on the island of Argo to the island of Bani (Beneh), located closer to the Mamlūk capital.[38] However, the Zubayr dynasty soon split into two camps. With the help of the Mamlūks, one of its members deposed the ruler Tumbul, who fled in exile to Egypt, seeking Muḥammad ᶜAlī's support to regain his position. In 1820, he returned to Dongola together with the expedition of conquest led by Ismāᶜīl Kāmil Pasha, the son of Muḥammad ᶜAlī, and was later installed as one of the *kāshifs* in the newly-founded province of Dongola (the governor of which became ᶜĀbidīn *Kāshif*, the second highest-ranking commander of the expedition).[39]

The greatest enemy of Mamlūks during their rule of Dongola was the Shāyqīya tribal confederation. It consisted of a number of statelets with separate chiefs. The most influential dynasties among them were the Ḥannikāb[40] led by Sibayr, and the ᶜAdlānāb[41] led by *Makk* Shāwīsh (Jawīsh), who was the most powerful ruler in the northern part of Sudan.[42] The Ḥannikāb controlled the areas near the borders of the Mamlūk domain – the upper lands of Dongola and the lower lands of the Shāyqīya country. The ᶜAdlānāb dynasty, which at the turn of the 19th century was in ascendance, ruled the northern part of Dongola and the upper regions inhabited by the Shāyqīya tribal confederation. The two *makks* were on good terms, which facilitated Shāwīsh's expansion into neighbouring regions in the first decade of the 19th century. By the time of the Mamlūks' arrival, Shāwīsh's influence extended further east, beyond the Bayūḍa desert, where he held sway over much of the western bank of the Nile from Barbar to the confluence of the White and Blue Nile. Following his victory over the *makk* of Barbar, he installed in his place a more docile member from the ruling family. Furthermore, he controlled some of the lands of the Jaᶜalīyūn tribe under his vassal *Makk* al-Musāᶜid from al-Matamma and also regions further south traditionally reigned over by the ᶜAbdallāb dynasty. *Makk*

[38] Ibid., p. 234.
[39] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 72; HOSKINS, G. A. *Travels in Ethiopia, above the Second Cataract of the Nile*, p. 208.
[40] Their capital was Ḥannik in the land of Shāyqīya. A city of the same name is located in Dongola and has already been mentioned in reference to the extent of the Mamlūk statelet being located in its northern part.
[41] The division into the two competing dynasties was the result of a split in the ruling family that took place at the beginning of the 1780s.
[42] To the north of the confluence of the Blue and White Nile.

Shāwīsh's goal prior to the arrival of the Mamlūks was to conquer and unify all of the former ᶜAbdallāb possessions[43] in the northern part of Sudan under his rule. However, the Mamlūk invasion, along with successful resistance of *Makk* Nimr,[44] prevented the materialization of this plan.[45]

During their stay in Dongola, the Mamlūks were in a permanent state of war with the Shāyqīya tribal confederation, against whom they had the upper hand. At the beginning of 1813, they organized a large military expedition to their country with the objective of conquering the ᶜAdlānāb capital, Merawe (Arab. Marawī). It seems that the Mamlūks used the earliest opportunity to deal a decisive blow to their bitter enemies and their only regional rivals as they undertook the campaign in their first winter in Dongola, when the temperatures were milder. The Mamlūks suffered greatly from the scorching heat of their first summer in Dongola and had to spend it on rafts on the Nile. The overwhelming majority of the Mamlūk army participated at the expedition, including the two chief commanders – Ibrāhīm Bey and ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey. Two battles took place, the first one near Kuraygh, the other near Hittan.[46] In both, the Mamlūks were victorious. While about 150 warriors died in the encounters on the Shāyqīya side, the Mamlūks lost about fifty of their fighters, a considerable loss given their low numbers. Reportedly, there was some friction between ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey and Ibrāhīm Bey following the second battle, and the latter returned to Dongola, leaving the former with insufficient manpower to press on with the campaign. In the end, the Mamlūks did not achieve their goal as they

[43] By the end of the 15th century, the ᶜAbdallāb ruled over the northern areas of Sudan downstream from the confluence of the Blue and White Nile. However, at the beginning of the 16th century the Funj defeated the ᶜAbdallāb at Arbajī (1504) and integrated their dominion into the Funj Sultanate (Funj Kingdom of Sinnār). In spite of their victory, they did not eliminate the ᶜAbdallāb dynasty, but made them their vassals who held the title of *mānjil* and exercised control over the northern part of the Funj Sultanate from their capital Qarrī. O'FAHEY, R. S., SPAULDING, J. *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, pp. 25–26, 47–48.

[44] Following the "Cousins' War" at the turn of the 19th century, the region inhabited by the Jaᶜalīyūn tribe was split between the Nimrāb and Saᶜdāb dynasties. The former, led by the more powerful *Makk* Nimr walad Muḥammad, occupied the eastern bank of the Nile, and had its capital at Shandī, a city of 7–8,000 inhabitants. SPAULDING, J. *The Heroic Age in Sinnār*, pp. 201–202.

[45] O'FAHEY, R. S., SPAULDING, J. *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, pp. 102–103; SPAULDING, J. *The Heroic Age in Sinnār*, pp. 216–217.

[46] Waddington points out an important fact that Hittan, the place where the second battle took place, is located about fifty miles closer to New Dongola than Kuraygh, therefore it would seem that the Mamlūks were returning when the second encounter took place. WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 228.

did not reach and conquer Marawī, the capital of *Makk* Shawīsh. Burckhardt, who visited Nubia at the time the Mamlūk expedition to the Shāyqīya country was ongoing, mentions that a group of Shāyqīya attacked and sacked Argo and al-Khandaq during the Mamlūks' absence. This could have been the reason for the split in the expeditionary forces and the return of Ibrāhīm Bey. However, Waddington denies that such an attack took place. When the Mamlūks found themselves unable to break the resistance of the Shāyqīya, they settled with ruling the northern part of Dongola, ceding the southern part to their rivals.[47]

Whilst the eighty-year-old Ibrāhīm Bey died of malaria at the turn of 1816,[48] ᶜAbdarraḥmān Bey retained his leadership of the Mamlūks until the end of their rule in Dongola in 1820. That year, prior to Muḥammad ᶜAlī's expedition to Sudan, ᶜAbdarraḥmān received his demand to surrender under favourable conditions, to which he sent back a brazen reply: "Tell Mahomed Ali, that we will be on no terms with our servant."[49] The Mamlūks's distrust of Muḥammad ᶜAlī's promises is very well understandable given their bitter experience with the Egyptian viceroy.

The Ultimate Fall of the Mamlūks

According to Waddington, about a hundred Mamlūks died in Dongola between 1812 and 1820.[50] In this respect, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt formulated an interesting evaluation of the future prospects of the Mamlūks, which he wrote down during his visit to Nubia in 1813. First, he describes how they were decimated by epidemic typhus[51] during the first summer of their settlement in

[47] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 228–229; BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 72–73, 256.

[48] Burckhardt reports that Ibrāhīm Bey died a few years earlier following the expedition against the Shāyqīya in 1813. BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, pp. 256

[49] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 230; BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 256; MCGREGOR, A. J. *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, p. 68.

[50] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 230.

[51] It is also possible that the major cause of the death among the Mamlūks during the first years of their stay in Dongola was malaria. While visiting New Dongola, Waddington noticed the unhealthiness of its environment due to marshes and pits with standing water located in that area. Malarial fever was therefore prevalent in the (by then) former Mamlūk capital, and every single soldier present fell ill to it at the time of his stopover. MCGREGOR, A. J. *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, p. 68; WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, p. 224.

Dongola. Subsequently, he continues with a reflection on the options the Mamlūks have if they want to prevent their gradual demise. Either they can attempt to return and re-establish themselves in Upper Egypt, which he considered hopeless given the current circumstances, or they can attempt to capture one of the Red Sea ports and start importing white slaves who would serve as their reinforcements.[52] The Mamlūks themselves, however, decided to pursue a different approach – staying in Dongola, establishing a statelet there, and strengthening their position – which proved to be a fatal mistake on their part. Unable to destroy the Shāyqīya tribal confederation, they were squeezed into a small territory, cut off from the outside world, decimated by diseases, and had to endure harsh climatic conditions they were not used to. In 1820, when Muḥammad ᶜAlī organized two expeditions to conquer the Funj Kingdom (in the eastern part of today's Sudan) and the Dārfūr Sultanate (in the western part of today's Sudan), among his most important aims was the destruction of the Mamlūk statelet in Dongola, as it constituted a potential threat to his regime. The Mamlūks, who at that time numbered about three hundred, did not resist the military expedition led by Ismāᶜīl Kāmil Pasha; instead, they left Dongola in June 1820, before the arrival of his troops.[53] Waddington asserts that they jointly retreated to the land of the Jaᶜalīyūn. The hatred between them and the Shāyqīya ran so deep that even during their retreat – while crossing their lands – the members of the Shāyqīya confederation attempted to set up a trap for them. The Mamlūks, however, surprised the culprits and beheaded those whom they managed to catch. Afterwards, they crossed the Bayūḍa desert toward the city of Shandī, which is located on the eastern bank of the Nile, halfway between the confluence of the Nile and ᶜAṭbara, and the sixth cataract of the Nile. Its ruler, *Makk* Nimr, did not let them enter the city, but allowed them to settle near his residence.[54] However, when Ismāᶜīl Kāmil Pasha defeated the Shāyqīya in two battles that took place in November and December 1820, *Makk* Nimr decided to surrender without fighting and ordered the Mamlūks to leave his territory. The Mamlūks then split into three groups. The largest group, led by ᶜAbdarraḥmān

[52] BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 73.

[53] ROBINSON, A. E. *The Mamelukes in the Sudan*, p. 93.

[54] For more details on the Turco-Egyptian expedition, see ROBINSON, A. E. *The Conquest of the Sudan by the Wali of Egypt*, part I, pp. 47–58; ROBINSON, A. E. The *Conquest of the Sudan by the Wali of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha, 1820 – 1824*, part II, pp. 164–182; BEŠKA, E. *Muḥammad ᶜAlī's Conquest of Sudan (1820 – 1824)*, pp. 30–56. It seems that even after their escape from Egypt the Mamlūks still commanded Muḥammad ᶜAlī's respect given the fact that he banned the sale of gunpowder in Upper Egypt in worry that the Mamlūks could possibly get hold of it. BURCKHARDT, J. L. *Travels in Nubia*, p. 8

Bey, left for Dārfūr. A smaller group headed towards the Red Sea, while the rest of them decided to surrender,[55] which they did in the first half of March 1821, during Ismāʿīl Kāmil Pasha's stopover in Barbar. Unlike in the past, when the Mamlūks who capitulated had been executed, this time the son of Muḥammad ʿAlī made a generous gesture – each of them received a thousand piastres, and they were allowed to return back to Egypt.[56] This clearly shows that, at this moment, Muḥammad ʿAlī no longer felt threatened by the Mamlūks given his much stronger position and their depleted ranks. On the contrary, by then, he considered them a valuable asset to be utilized in the building of a new professional army. The majority, led by ʿAbdarraḥmān Bey, went first to Dārfūr and then further west to Waddāy; however, they were not allowed to settle at either place. They stayed in Waddāy for four months and, afterwards, the group divided again: one part went south (but apparently then changed their minds and decided to return to Sudan); the other, consisting of twenty-six Mamlūks, went north. During the journey, the caravan which they joined found itself in a conflict with the members of the Borgu tribe (an ethnic group that lives in the eastern part of Chad and speaks Maba language). About twenty Mamlūks died in the subsequent skirmishes. The pitiful six-member group led by Muḥammad Bey and ʿAlī Bey met Major Dixon Denham on 20 October 1822 near Temenhint, north of the Libyan town of Murzuq. They meant to reach Tripoli (Ṭarābulus al-Gharb) and, according to Hoskins, at least some of them managed to arrive and settle there.[57] What is remarkable is the date of this encounter, as it shows that, by that time, these Mamlūks had been roaming in the interior of Africa for 28 months.

This was an inglorious end for the former long-term proud masters of Egypt. Far from their home, powerless and lacking both wealth and shelter, the last of them were wandering about in the African Sahel, seeking refuge. The last place they ruled, Dongola, became a province of Egyptian Sudan, and their capital of New Dongola the seat of the provincial governor. It would take more than six decades before the rule in Dongola would return, though temporarily, to the

[55] WADDINGTON, G., HANBURY, B. *Journal of a Visit to Some Parts of Ethiopia*, pp. 230–232.

[56] ENGLISH, G.B. *A Narrative of the Expedition to Dongola and Sennaar Under the Command of His Excellence Ismael Pasha, undertaken by Order of His Highness Mehemmed Ali Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt*, pp. 110–111.

[57] DENHAM, D., CLAPPERTON, H. *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in ... 1822, 1823 and 1824, by Major Denham, Capt. Clapperton and Dr. Oudney. With an Appendix*, pp. xxxii–xxxiii; HOSKINS, G. A. *Travels in Ethiopia, above the Second Cataract of the Nile*, p. 202.

hands of the Sudanese – during the Mahdist State (1885 – 1898) founded by a Dongolese, Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Mahdī (1844 – 1885).

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